

SILAS VON MORISSE *presents*

# ART SPIEL

NOVEMBER 19, 2019 BY ETTY YANIV

## Juliette Dumas – Whale Flukes Paintings at The Neue House New York

**In Dialogue with gallerist Silas Von Morisse on the Whale Flukes  
Paintings and beyond**



Lifesize of Juliette Dumas Whale Fluke (Night), Installation view at The Neue House New York  
Clay and pigments on thick paper mounted on canvas Two Panels: each 60 x 72 in. Overall dimensions: 60 x  
144 in. (152.40 x 365.76 cm) JDO78; **Lifesize**

Silas von Morisse founded a reputable gallery in Bushwick in 2014. Then, in 2018, due to notable shifts in the art world for small venues like hers, she decided to drastically change her model: from exhibiting in a physical venue, to featuring art as a mostly online presence paired with events which enable viewing in person. Silas von Morisse shares with Art Spiel her changed mode of operation, while highlighting the current show featuring Whale Flukes paintings by the French artist Juliette Dumas.

**AS: Tell me a bit about the history of your gallery, including your current mode of operation.**

**SVM:** I established the Silas von Morisse gallery in February 2014 after 14 years of working extensively for well-known galleries in New York. After 12 years of managing the Helly Nahmad Gallery New York – one of the biggest Impressionist & Modern art collections in the world – I left to run the team at Haunch of Venison New York as AVP Senior Gallery Manager. Haunch of Venison was the Contemporary Art gallery that belonged to Francois Pinault who also owns Christie's. Both these experiences were fantastic and I learned everything I had to know about the art world. However, my real passion has always been with “living art & artists”. In 2013, when Francois Pinault closed his galleries in London and New York, I decided it was time to open my own gallery. I officially opened the gallery in Bushwick in 2014. The gallery was originally named ART 3 which I later renamed Silas von Morisse gallery. The program focused on introducing emerging artists and re-introducing more mature talents who were undervalued. I ran the gallery for 5 years in that location following the classical gallery model: solo exhibitions 6 times a year for our represented artists, group shows in the Summer and artists talks. All events were very well attended and received formidable support from respected and renowned art critics, writers and artists. We had a lovely follow up and a nice collectors base.

After 5 years, a lot of things were changing in the art world for a small operation like mine, which I financially backed entirely on my own. It became very difficult to continue with a physical space. I noticed over the years that attendance was high at openings but not afterwards. Also, the gallery philosophy was always to focus on the “quality” of the art presented, not the speculative monetary aspect of the business. I

changed the gallery model in July 2018 from a physical space to a mostly “online presence”. I still occasionally produce some physical shows and events in NYC or other locations around the world because I do love collaborating with other galleries, dealers and curators to achieve the best possible outcome for the artists. As I had acquired over the years a strong mailing list, I started to design personalized email campaigns adding “Online Viewing Rooms” with 3D rooms. I also wrote personal letters to clients who positively responded asking to see works directly shipped to their homes. Accordingly, I organized with shippers, warehouses and artist’s studios to bring my clients what they wanted. Clients are busy, and I created a formula that works for them.

While the online presence continues to grow, I created “The von Morisse Art Salon” in the spirit of Peggy Guggenheim, showing Art in private intimate settings with a few artists paired together to stimulate greater conversations. I find it more interesting on many levels. Eventually, it seems like a good solution for smaller dealers or gallerists like me. I can show “my curated selection” of art and artists in a friendly environment without the burden of unsustainable business models.

**AS: In Whale Flukes, your current exhibition, the French artist Juliette Dumas seems to draw on a wide array of sources ranging from “cave paintings to Cézanne’s studies of the Montagne Sainte Victoire.” Can you elaborate on her premise?**

**SVM:** Juliette Dumas does draw from a wide array of sources. She is foremost a painter by formation hence her fascination with Cezanne. An important factor in her premise is that she subscribes to the “Rio Negro Manifesto” created in Brazil in 1978 by French art critic Pierre Restany while he travelled the Amazon river. The manifesto he wrote, with two other Brazilian artists, is all about “Art for Nature” and about raising Consciousness about Earth and the Natural World Through Art. In short, Dumas paintings are a study of the language of Nature, she is about raising consciousness. That is what drives her.

With the Whale Flukes, Dumas became very preoccupied with whales and she wanted to reveal their fragility, their enormous importance in our ecosystem – especially now when so few remain. She decided to create life-size whale flukes. The flukes are the tail part of the whales which records an individual’s history, age, scars and events, like fingerprints for humans. On the life-size whale flukes that Dumas

created (like the one on view at the Neue House), you can poignantly see the marks from the fishing nets that scarred the whale.

The first time I saw the life-sized whale flukes, I was stunned by the force that they emanated. Not only were they visually magnificent, but Dumas had achieved something so rare that I was speechless. You have to see the work in person, because only then you can feel every scrap, every line that Dumas painstakingly forged in the clay with her own hands. It was an homage to a species she fell in love with and wanted us to feel the same.

**AS: Can you elaborate on her use of clay? In your PR it says that “Dumas creates clay and paint canvases drawing by subtraction into the fresh ‘skin’ of the painting.” This is a fascinating process – I would love to learn more about it.**

**SVM:** Dumas used clay for the whale flukes because clay is related to the earth and has a primal feel to it, a decision she made after seeing the cave paintings of Lascaux in France. Dumas is very secretive on how she developed her technique, however, I can say that clay allowed her to sculpt creating layers by mixing pigments, water and earth, adding and subtracting in a process that was extremely physical, literally bathing with the canvases in the water. Dumas called those layers of clay “skins” referring to the skins of the mammals.

**AS: Please tell me a bit more about the artist.**

**SVM:** Juliette Dumas operated a 180 degrees shift in her thinking between her first show at Silas Von Morisse gallery (No Safe Harbor, 2016) and her second show (ANGELS, 2018).

Her work between 2013-2016, after graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Villa Arson in Nice France, consisted of highly intellectual ephemeral installations that tried to sound the alarm about the environmental crisis on our planet (ex: butcher block of ice screwed to the wall and melting in real time leaving nothing afterwards).

After the show *No Safe Harbor*, Dumas realized that installing ephemeral installations triggered by an anxiety and responsibility for the planet did not help enough to bring a higher level of consciousness. She

started seeking ways to replace the feeling of fear by the feeling of love, resilience, hope for the future, gratitude, joy. She realized that human thought has the power to create, and that instead of fueling the already bad situation with ideas of collapse, she wanted her work to project strength and hope for the future. At that time, she also discovered the tradition of Ho'oponopono, the Hawaiian cleansing method to restore balance.

To embody this Hawaiian philosophy, Dumas wanted to find an “icon” image. She naturally gravitated to the Humpback Whale who embodies the energy of love and resilience. The Hawaiians call them Koholas, the guardians of sacred energy, and see them with a large sphere of energy all around them. They are regarded as deities. This is when Dumas started to work with smaller diptychs of the fluke of the humpback whale which evolved in 2018 to be life-sized. Dumas went multiple times to see whales in their natural habitats. She swam with them to feel their energy, in Iceland and Norway.

At the time Dumas started the series of Whale Fluke paintings in New York, actual whales were present in New York city harbor but Dumas was not aware of it yet. She discovered that fact long after she started her work. Hence the extraordinary relevance of her work presented now at the Neue House which was created in New York City when whales were starting to gather in NYC harbor and are now present in NYC harbor in numbers never seen before.

Dumas search continues and she is presently back in her studio in France, working on her next solo exhibition with silas von morisse scheduled for fall 2020.

### **AS: How can viewers see the show?**

**SVM:** The viewers can see Juliette Dumas Whale Flukes at the Neue House in New York, 110 East 25th Street. Monday to Saturday 12 to 6 Pm. The Neue House is a Private space so you need to email me your name and day of visit so I can notify the Neue House to have your name at the reception desk and allow you in: [silas@silasvonmorisse.com](mailto:silas@silasvonmorisse.com)

**All photos courtesy of Silas Von Morisse Gallery**

## **Juliette Dumas Whale Flukes runs through January 15th, 2020 at the Neue House NYC**

### **Juliette Dumas Bio:**

Dumas was born in 1987 in Paris France She completed her BA at Villa Arson in Nice France (the best contemporary art school in France) and she did her MFA at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in 2013. She has been awarded residencies at Festival Grandeur Nature, Ristolas, France in 2009 and La Station, Nice in 2015. She was nominated for Clare Rosen and Samuel Edes Foundation Prize for Emerging Artists by The Painting and Drawing Department of the School of the Arts Institute of Chicago. Dumas' work was featured in notable group and solo exhibitions including "Winter Studies" (2015), Kunstverein Gaestezimmer E. V., Stuttgart, Germany (curated by Alf Setzer), "Ad Hoc" (2015), La Station, Nice, France (curated by Collectif Culbuto). In 2017, she was seen at 2020 with Sara Mejia Kriendler at The Chimney, then in the group show "Les Silences de La Fumee" after an original work by Noel Dolla curated by Gustav Geir Bollason and David Zehla VerksmidJan A. Hjalteyri, Iceland. And again in "Unseen Hand" at the Knockdown Center curated by Nikita Vishnevskiy in Brooklyn New York. Dumas first (2016) and second (2018) solo exhibitions were held at Silas von Morisse in New York. Her work has been reviewed in Artercritical, Hyperallergic, Wall Street International, Blouin Art Info, Delicious Line, Vaihingen & Mohringen Germany.

Pdf of **Dumas *Whale Flukes paintings*** available upon request  
**to see the show contact silas von morisse gallery to ask for entry at The Neue House: [info@silasvonmorisse.com](mailto:info@silasvonmorisse.com) 646 331 3162**



JULIETTE DUMAS

Whale Fluke (Night), 2018

Clay and pigments on thick paper mounted on canvas

Two Panels: each 60 x 72 in. Overall dimensions: 60 x 144 in. (152.40 x 365.76 cm)

JDo78

Lifesize



installation view at Silas von Morisse, June 2018

**JULIETTE DUMAS**

Whale Fluke (Night), 2018

Clay and pigments on thick paper mounted on canvas

Two Panels: each 60 x 72 in. Overall dimensions: 60 x 144 in. (152.40 x 365.76 cm)

JDO78





JULIETTE DUMAS  
Whale Fluke (Jonathan Livingston Seagull), 2018  
Clay and pigments on thick paper mounted on canvas  
Two panels: each 48 x 48 inches, overall dimensions 48 x 96 inches  
JD102

**Selected 2019 & 2018 PRESS for JULIETTE DUMAS**

**[ART SPIEL - Nov 2019- Juliette Dumas-Whale Flukes](#)**

**[Paintings at The Neue House New York](#)**

**[HYPERALLERGIC - Best of 2018: Our Top 15 Brooklyn Art Shows - Juliette Dumas Angels \(December 2018\)](#)**

**[HYPERALLERGIC April 2018 \(Juliette Dumas\)](#)**



SILAS VON MORISSE GALLERY

by appointment only

Mailing address:

200 Park Avenue, Suite 1700

New York, NY 10166

+ 646 331 3162

[info@silasvonmorisse.com](mailto:info@silasvonmorisse.com)

- contact the gallery for our exhibitions locations, further information, studio visits and private viewings.

© the artists courtesy SILAS VON MORISSE gallery

[silasvonmorisse.com](http://silasvonmorisse.com)